



Field Days to Focus on How to Grow Specialty Crops in Northern Wisconsin

Release Date: April 7, 2017

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MADISON – Growers interested in learning about specialty crop growing techniques in northern Wisconsin are invited to attend two Specialty Crop Field Days hosted by the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection. The field days will be held May 24-25, 2017 in the Bayfield area and will feature farm visits to four local farms where specialty crops are grown.

Specialty crops are defined in law as “fruits and vegetables, tree nuts, dried fruits, horticulture, and nursery crops (including floriculture).”

Although Wisconsin, which produces more than 600 varieties of cheese and dairy products, is well known for its dairy output, the state also produces a wide variety of specialty crops, including cranberries, apples, strawberries and a host of other valuable agricultural commodities. In fact, Wisconsin leads the nation in the production of cranberries and snap beans for processing, and ranks in the top ten for crops such as potatoes, cherries, maple syrup, carrots, and sweet corn.

“DATCP’s Agriculture and Food Center is hosting the field days to help showcase the unique variety of specialty crops grown in northern Wisconsin and to help spread the knowledge of savvy growers who cultivate these crops,” said Angie Sullivan, DATCP producer development consultant. “This is an excellent opportunity to learn more about this important segment of Wisconsin agriculture.”

“We welcome all growers interested in learning more about fruit and specialty crop growing techniques in the northern part of the state, especially beginning to somewhat experienced farmers,” said Kietra Olson, DATCP Wisconsin Foods Program manager. “We hope field days participants will gain more knowledge about efficient ways to cultivate their crops, and all participants will receive a packet of useful resources to take home with them.”

Field Days attendees will tour four farms over two days featuring different specialty crops, as follows:

- Wednesday, May 24 (9 a.m.-4 p.m.), Blue Vista Farms, organic blueberries; Erickson’s Orchard, apples and pears;
- Thursday, May 25 (9 a.m.-4 p.m.), Seven Ponds Winery, hazelnuts and grapes; Rocky Acres Farm, strawberries.

Registration (\$25 for one day; \$50 for both days) includes lunch, morning and afternoon snacks, a resources bundle and farms tours. Register at <https://uwccs.eventsair.com/nwicrop/reg>. DATCP will forward itinerary information to registrants after registration has been completed.

Olson said DATCP will be compiling a Northern Wisconsin Fruit Growing Guide after the field days. Planning also is under way to host a similar Specialty Crops Field Days event in Door County in July.

For more information, contact Kietra Olson at Kietra.Olson@Wisconsin.gov or Angie.Sullivan@Wisconsin.gov. For more information about specialty crops: https://datcp.wi.gov/Pages/Growing_WI/SpecialtyCrops.aspx